



State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913

PH (517) 373.1635 | FAX (517) 373.3300

[www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/vanwoerkom/](http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/vanwoerkom/)

For Immediate Release  
April 21, 2004

Contact: Jeff Cobb  
(517) 373-1635

## **Van Woerkom's Food Processing Summit highlighted need for jobs and utilizing resources in West Michigan**

**LANSING** – A Food Processing Summit bringing together the food processing industry and government officials highlighted the need to create jobs and utilize resources in West Michigan, said chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Tourism Gerald Van Woerkom, R-Norton Shores.

“The summit allowed food processing experts to voice their concerns and provided government officials with a chance to reach out to members of this important industry,” Van Woerkom said. “Job opportunities created by the industry are important to workers and families in West Michigan communities.”

The summit held two panel discussions, one from the food processing industry and one of government officials.

The industry panel focused on methods to improve the relationship between the Department of Environmental Quality and the food processing industry. The panel also stressed the need for better workforce training, concerns on the cost of wastewater treatment and workman's compensation insurance.

Three members of industry panel are part of existing agricultural renaissance zones. They cited the importance of the tax break to the industry and encouraged its expansion. In 2003, Van Woerkom sponsored legislation to create 11 new renaissance zones in the state. The zones have provided several hundred new job opportunities for workers in Oceana County.

Government panel members, including Dan Wyant, director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture, and representatives from the DEQ, Michigan Economic Development Corporation, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, provided an overview of their relationship with the food processing industry. The panelists discussed efforts to work with the industry, statewide grants awarded to food processors and economic programs available for its members.

###